



backswimmer

representative species

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Insecta
Order:	Hemiptera
Family:	Notonectidae

Features

Backswimmers undergo incomplete metamorphosis (egg, nymph, adult). Their back is convex and light in color while the belly is dark. The forewings are very thick at the base and membranous (thin, pliable) at the tip. The hind wings are membranous and shorter than the forewings. The wings are held flat over the body while at rest. The hind legs are much longer than the middle or front pairs. The legs have swimming hairs. Sucking mouthparts allow for the ingestion of liquid foods. Adults are about one-half inch long.

Natural History

Backswimmers live in ponds, streams, ditches, and lakes. They frequently are seen resting on the water's surface. They eat other insects and small vertebrates. They swim upside down, using their back legs as oars. They carry a bubble of air for breathing when swimming under water. The eggs are deposited on or in aquatic plants.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.